



The Prague Christian Fellowship POST

Monthly Newsletter of the Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF

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John Mullen, PCF Pastor

Promises of God, Part II

Last month I started a series on the Promises of God. Somehow I feel this topic is important to me and to us as a community. As I wrote last month, it is as if the promises of God represent a different paradigm from which our Christian life can flow. The promises of God are not a logical left brain, cause and effect phenomena. They exemplify the mercy, kindness, and goodness of God. Believing God's promises require my faith, and my faith requires my relationship with the one giving the promise. The whole concept of God's promises seems to embody life in the Spirit.

Let me try to illustrate my point here with a biblical story found in Matthew 18 (my Bible calls it *The Story of the Unforgiving Debtor*). You probably remember the famous line, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No!" Jesus replied, "seventy times seven!" Jesus illustrates his point with the story of a servant who cannot pay his debt and in the sentencing for his crime begs his king for clemency. The king forgives millions of euros and the servant goes free. Then the servant went to another servant who owed him a few thousand and demanded instant payment. The other servant begged for mercy similarly as the first servant had done. However, he received no mercy and was thrown in prison until the debt could be paid in full. News of this got back to the king. He asks the first servant, "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had with you?" The angry king then sends the man to prison until his debt would be paid in full.

For me this story illustrates the difference between the undeserved mercy (I will call it "our inheritance" as believers) and the antithesis – living accord-

ing to the "law of the jungle" – according to the law of sowing and reaping. The first servant does not deserve the king's mercy. He owes millions of dollars. It was his choice to borrow the money and his responsibility to pay it back. But the king has mercy on him. He wipes out the debt. Of course, this is Jesus' illustration of what God has done with our debt of sin.

Believing God's promises require our faith, and our faith requires our relationship with the one giving the promise.

From here we can see the foundation of the promises of God. It is his mercy, his kindness, his goodness. Out of his heart come his promises to us...

Jeremiah 31:34 - *"And I will forgive their wickedness and will never again remember their sins."*

1 John 2:12 - *I am writing to you, my dear children, because your sins have been forgiven because of Jesus.*

Isaiah 1:18 - *"No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool."*

What's Inside?

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- ◆ PCF Birthdays & Prayer Info
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- ◆ Photos of Belarus Mission Trip

Zechariah 3:8 & 10 - *"Soon I am going to bring my servant, the Branch..." says the LORD Almighty, "and I will remove the sins of this land in a single day."*

Psalms 103:3a & 12 - *He forgives all my sins... He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.*

Believing God's promises require our faith, and our faith requires our relationship with the one giving the promise. In this story we see that because of the mercy of the king, the first servant receives mercy. However, because of his LACK OF RELATIONSHIP with the king he fails to believe his debt is forgiven and goes out to find money even after being absolved of the debt. Does he not know that the king has the power and authority to wipe out the debt? Does he feel the king is unpredictable and not to be trusted? "This evil king might change his mind." I can imagine the servant thinking... "Ah, I cannot count on him and I better take matters into my own

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Skiing Retreat

The next PCF Retreat will be **February 2008** in the Czech mountains for skiing, fresh air, refreshment, teaching and fellowship.

Family Profile



Reem Srouji



I was born to a Christian Arab family in Naveh Shalom near Jerusalem. The thing is, the Arabs are divided into two religions back home, so they are either Christians or Muslims. The religion is inherited. But I was born to a family of believers. From mom's side, my grandfather was a pastor and few of my cousins are too. My grandmother used to talk to me all the time about Jesus and how much He loves us. I used to read for her from the Bible because she couldn't read it herself without her eyeglasses. Even when I was 4 years old, I used to tell my dad that I wanted to go to church and see "the Jesus"; that's what I used to call him - "the Jesus." I have no idea why. Anyway, my aunt is also a strong believer. Each time we went to visit her she always talked about the Lord. My mom used to sing me some of the Christian songs from church when I was little. My parents were involved with the church for a while before my siblings and I were born. So, I heard about the word of God often and when I became 11 years old I gave my life to Jesus and declared Him as my King. Through the years I came to know the Lord more and more, and learned how to build a good relationship with Him. Thus, on July 24th, 2005, I got baptized in the Jordan river. Since then I have lived for Jesus and God's glory.

I grew up in the town of Nazareth. It's a very small crowded city with narrow streets. I love this city because Jesus was there before me and I think it is a blessing to stand on the same ground where He did. What I love the most in Nazareth is a place called "Nazareth Village," where one can "step into the life Jesus knew".

As a Christian Arab, I struggled with an identity issue. I didn't know how to define myself exactly. On the one hand I have an Israeli ID, which means I am

a citizen of Israel and that I am one of its people. On the other hand, according to history I must be a Palestinian. Actually, two months ago I found out about a website with my family tree, and it seems that the Sroujies came from Syria. Later some families moved to the states, Lebanon and Israel. I still don't know how to define myself precisely, because in some cases, for example, when I go out of Nazareth to visit other cities where not only Arabs live, I don't feel very connected to the people, or to the country in general. When I used to watch the news with my dad, seeing Palestinians getting shot and tortured and families breaking apart aroused lots of strong feelings in me for them. However, in some cases, I also didn't feel connected with the Palestinians since the Christians are a minority among them. Moreover, I was crushed to see Jews getting hurt, especially in the time when the busses were bombed. As Israelis we were all worried about our families. But I thank the Lord who opened my eyes to show me that I don't have to be on anyone's side, but on His. He taught me to show love and care as a Christian for all people. So I don't look at it now as an Israeli-Palestinian problem, but I see it as a spiritual struggle. It makes me sad and very angry when I see all these people from both sides being killed. I am angry with one only - his name is Satan - who loves to take people's souls away from the salvation Jesus gave. As God's warrior, I will keep holding my sword, praying for Palestinians, Jews and all Israelis to be saved from death by knowing Christ. For once the Lord lives in us, peace takes up

its place. Every day I pray to be more like Him and less like me. The world would tell me, "hate your enemy" but the Lord tells me to love him.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" (Matthew 5:43-46).

We must not forget as well:

"On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Roman 12:20-21).

I came to the Czech Republic about a year ago as a student at Charles University. I believed that it was the right thing to do even though I didn't want to come. I was afraid of being alone but through my prayers I knew it was the right place to be. My parents were excited since Charles University is known to be an excellent university for medicine. I pray to become a superb doctor one day, so I can use my skills for God's glory.

Our God is an awesome God. Let us praise Him every day we live on this earth till we see Him in heaven.

"Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it.

Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD."

(Proverbs 8:33-35)

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hands!"

His cruel relationship to the other servant reflects his LACK of relationship with God. He is not walking in faith or in the blessing of God. Rather, it is a great of example of walking in the flesh. The king says, "Fine, if you want to live by the law of sowing and reaping, go ahead! You pay all your debt back yourself."

Now the unbeliever's question is, "What happened to the king's promise? Didn't he promise to forgive the man's debt? " My answer is that God's provision was rejected by the servant. He chose instead to find a way to pay back his own debt.

This kind of attitude affects Christians and non-Christians alike. "I know God has forgiven me BUT I better work hard and live a good life to pay him back." It is the foundation for legalism. It robs the church of the blessings that God wants to pour out on us.

It is clear, then, that God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was not based on obedience to God's law, but on the new relationship with God that comes by faith. So if you claim that God's promise is for those who obey God's law and think they are "good enough" in God's sight, then you are saying that faith is useless. And in that case, the promise is also meaningless. But the law brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!) So that's why faith is the key! God's promise is given to us as a free gift. And we are certain to receive it, whether or not we follow Jewish customs, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe (Romans 4:13-16).


The best definition of living in the Spirit is **living by faith**. It has nothing to do with the Pharisaical appearances we put on around others. It has everything to do with our attitude and actions toward the Lord. Are you faith-

ful? Are you honest? Are you living for God or for yourself? Are you trusting in God's resources or your own? Living by faith is living in the Spirit!

My point is simply there is a big difference between living our life in God and claiming our inheritance vs. living outside of our life in God and receiving our portion according to the law of sowing and reaping. David was an Israelite king but was *not* living in the Spirit and trusting God to provide all his needs at that time he took Bathsheba into his bed. Eli was a priest but was *not* walking in the Spirit and trusting in God's grace to strengthen his weakness to discipline his boys. Elijah was a prophet but was *not* following the leading of the Spirit and trusting God to help him overcome the temptation to run in fear rather than stand in faith (the MP3 of the sermon has more detail). If these biblical characters can fail to walk in God's promises, we can as well. God's promises are an invitation rather than a guarantee. The invitation is to build a relationship with God and trust him. It is an invitation to believe; an invitation to walk in faith.



DID YOU KNOW?
The best way to keep up with your giving for TAX records is via bank transfer.
 Contact Evzen Pekarek for assistance with tax receipts at PekarekEvzen@seznam.cz.

 **PRAYER REQUESTS**

- 1) Church Finances** – Please pray for provision to cover our expenses and wisdom in spending and giving.
- 2) Former PCF members involved with full-time ministry** such as David & Linda Snell, Sam & Rosalee Ewell, Steve & Emma Gower, Michael Stadler and Roger & Robin Harsh for God's total provision and protection in their lives. **"Always keep on praying for all the saints." (Eph. 16:18)**
- 3) Church staff** – Please pray that God would call some missionaries to come and serve at PCF.

 **Upcoming Birthdays**
 The following PCF members past and present will be having birthdays this month.

New PCF Bank Info:
 Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF,
 eBanka Account No.
 181730394/2400
 Variable symbol: 10261
 Contact Evzen Pekarek for assistance at PekarekEvzen@seznam.cz

PCF Finances

November 2007	
+97,569	Total Income
4860	Internet & Comm.
8,500	Office Rent & Elec.
5,000	Church Rent
2721	Supplies & Equip.
978	Copying & Publishing
28,350	Salaries/Employ Tax
0	Evangelism & Teach
0	Church Giving
2,580	Fees & Advertising
0	Miscellaneous
52,990	Total Expenses
44,579	Net Income

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.

Pavel Denk	January 1
Arlyn Garcia	January 1
Lydia Sposaro	January 3
Johan van Straaten	January 4
Anna Ceplová	January 4
Stuart Redgard	January 6
Matthew Spousta	January 7
Dimitris Kavakas	January 14
Corrie Van Schalwyk	January 14
Ester Moriah Mullen	January 16
Marek Václavík	January 18
Alvaro Vallejos	January 19
Sarah Reinhardt	January 22
Anna Lang	January 23
Matina Doležalová	January 23
Tomáš Sedláček	January 23
Mirek Šebesta	January 24
Kamila Gawliková	January 24
Linda Wang	January 26
Bridget Kropf	January 26
Matthew Mullen	January 27
Artie Sposaro	January 27
Joe McCall	January 29
Zdenek Horak	January 31
Peter Gohman	January 31

WHO AM I

PCF MISSIONS

I am accepted...

John 1:12 – I am God's child.

John 15:15 – As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.

Eph. 1:3-8 – I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.

Col. 2:9-10 – I am complete in Christ.

I am secure...

Phil. 3:20 – I am a citizen of heaven.

1 John 5:18 – I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

Col. 3:1-4 – I am hidden with Christ in God.

Rom. 8:1-2 – I am free from condemnation.

Phil. 1:6 – I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.

I am significant...

John 15:16 – I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.

1 Cor. 3:16 – I am God's temple.

Eph. 2:6 – I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.

Eph. 2:10 – I am God's workmanship.

Eph. 3:12 – I may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Phil. 4:13 – I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.



Dec
2007

Minsk
Belarus

Trip

Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is February 20, 2008.